

The Dogma of

HELL

HELL

THE DOGMA OF HELL, ILLUSTRATED BY FACTS TAKEN
FROM PROFANE AND SACRED HISTORY

by

Rev. Father F. X. Schouppe, S.J.

*“And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold:
them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice,
and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”*

—John 10:16

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary for the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls. Whatever of good this book contains is due to her inspiration.

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HELL

by Fr. F. X. Schouppe, S.J.

CHAPTER I

The Dogma of Hell

The Dogma of Hell is the most terrible truth of our faith. There *is* a Hell. We are as sure of it as of the existence of God, the existence of the sun. Nothing, in fact, is more clearly revealed than the dogma of Hell, and Jesus Christ proclaims it as many as fifteen times in the Gospel.

Reason comes to the support of revelation; the existence of a Hell is in harmony with the immutable notions of justice engraved in the human heart. Revealed to men from the beginning and conformable to natural reason, this dreadful truth has always been and is still known by all nations not plunged by barbarism into complete ignorance.

Hell never has been denied by heretics, Jews or Mohammedans. The pagans themselves have retained their belief in it, although the errors of paganism may have impaired in their minds the sound notion.

It has been reserved for modern and contemporaneous atheism, carried to the pitch of delirium, to outdo the impiety of all ages by denying the existence of Hell.

There are in our day men who laugh at, question or openly deny the reality of Hell.

They laugh at Hell. But the universal belief of nations should not be laughed at: a matter affecting the everlasting

destiny of man is not laughable; there is no fun when the question is of enduring for eternity the punishment of fire.

They question or even deny the dogma of Hell; but on a matter of religious dogma, they cannot decide without being competent; they cannot call into doubt, still less deny, a belief so solidly established, without bringing forward irrefragable reasons.

Now, are they who deny the dogma of Hell competent in matters of religion? Or are they not strangers to that branch of the sciences which is called theology? Are they not oftenest ignorant of the very elements of religion, taught in the Catechism?

Whence, then, proceeds the mania of grappling with a religious question which is not within their province? Why such warmth in combatting the belief in Hell? Ah! It is interest that prompts them; they are concerned about the nonexistence of Hell, knowing that if there is a Hell, it shall be their portion. These unhappy men wish that there might not be one, and they try to persuade themselves that there is none. In fact, these efforts usually end in a sort of incredulity. At bottom, this belief is only a doubt, but a doubt which unbelievers formulate by a negation.

Accordingly, they say there is no Hell. And upon what reasons do they rest so bold a denial?

All their reasons and arguments may be summed up in the following assertions:

“I do not believe in Hell.

“They who affirm this dogma know nothing about it; the future life is an insoluble problem, an invincible *perhaps*.

“No one has returned from beyond the grave to testify that there is a Hell.”

These are all the proofs, all the theology of the teachers of impiety. Let us examine:

FIRST: *I do not believe in it.* You do not believe in Hell? And there is no Hell because you do not believe in it? Will Hell exist any the less because you do not please to believe in it? Should a thief be so foolish as to deny that there is a prison? Would the prison thereby cease to exist if he did not believe in it? And would the thief not enter it?

SECOND: *You say that the future life is a problem and Hell a "perhaps."* You are deceived; this problem is fully solved by Revelation and left in no uncertainty.

But suppose for a moment that there were an uncertainty, that the existence of eternal torments were only probable, and that it may be said: "*Perhaps there is no Hell.*" I ask any man of sound reason, would he not be the silliest of men who, upon such a *perhaps*, should expose himself to the punishment of an everlasting fire?

THIRD: They say that *no one returned from beyond the grave to tell us about Hell.* If it were true that no one has returned, would Hell exist the less? Is it the damned who ought to teach us that there is a Hell? It might as well be said that it is prisoners who ought to inform us that there are prisons. To know that there is a Hell, it is not necessary that the damned should come to tell us; God's word is sufficient for us; God it is who publishes it and informs the world concerning it.

But are you who claim that no dead person has returned to speak of Hell; are you quite sure of it? You say it, you declare it; but you have against you historical, proved, unimpeachable facts. I do not speak here of Jesus Christ, who descended into "Hell," and rose again from the dead; there are other dead persons who returned to life and damned souls who have

revealed their everlasting reprobation. Still, whatever may be the historical certainty of this sort of facts, I repeat, it is not upon this ground that we claim to establish the dogma of Hell; that truth is known to us by the infallible word of God; the facts which we adduce serve but to confirm and place it in a clearer light.